RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

EHRLICH'S MONUMENTAL WORK ON THE OLD TESTAMENT[1]

There can be no doubt that this is the most important work on the Old Testament that has appeared during the last ten or fifteen years. It is nothing less than monumental. The results of the study of a lifetime are presented here in clear, concise, and interesting form, in "marginal notes," by one of the greatest Hebrew scholars of our day. Ehrlich knows Hebrew as few others; his knowledge of the whole realm of Hebrew literature is amazing, not only on account of its thoroughness, but also on account of its critical and scientific quality. He thinks in Hebrew and detects the slightest offense against Hebrew idiom with almost unfailing accuracy.

Ehrlich is primarily a philologist. His grammatical and lexical contributions are so numerous, so important, so acute, that no grammarian or lexicographer can afford to neglect Ehrlich's *Randglossen*. The syntactical notes, the removal of a number of textual difficulties by pointing out the right construction of the sentence which had been misunderstood, the keen discussion of the force of synonyms, the careful observation of the meaning of phrases as distinct from that of the single words, the new understanding of the meaning of difficult, or sometimes of apparently easy, words on the basis of their usage in the Old Testament or post-biblical Hebrew literature or by comparison with the Arabic—all these give a wonderful wealth of new and valuable knowledge to the careful student of these volumes.

Fortunately, Ehrlich is not a believer in the infallibility of the Massoretic Text, but recognizes its defects and sets out to remedy them with remarkable text-critical skill. His textual emendations are often brilliant and convincing, always suggestive, always in idiomatic Hebrew, always worthy of serious consideration even when they cannot be accepted. Often he is the first to give the true solution of a textual difficulty; often he thinks that he presents it for the first time, when in reality others have hit upon the same solution before him. In one sense

[1] *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel, textkritisches, sprachliches und sachliches.* By Arnold B. Ehrlich. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–14. 7 vols.

his complete independence of the work of others, which occasionally assumes the attitude of scorn, is a source of weakness, for it tempts him to make remarks which are unworthy of him. Nobody could regret these blots on Ehrlich's work more than I do, but it would be foolish to allow them to blind one to the really magnificent work that Ehrlich has given us.

It goes without saying that there are many passages where the exegesis is completely transformed by Ehrlich's incisive and illuminating treatment. Nobody could accept everything that Ehrlich writes. As a matter of fact, he frequently provokes dissent. But he himself is constantly ready to modify his conclusions, as the appendix shows.

The higher critic will not get much that is valuable from these volumes. The occasional higher critical remarks, sometimes quite radical, do not belong to the really valuable portions of Ehrlich's work. He is not interested in this aspect of Old Testament study.

I had intended to give a number of illustrative examples of his grammatical, lexical, textual, and exegetical notes in order to give an idea of the character of the work. But I find this almost impossible because of the wealth of material. Almost any page might serve as a good example.

One point should be brought out with special emphasis: the extraordinary amount of light which is shed on all kinds of problems, especially philological, by Ehrlich's wonderful knowledge of the post-biblical Hebrew literature. Here Ehrlich is unsurpassed by modern scholars.

The student—and it is only for students that Ehrlich writes—will find, the more he uses Ehrlich's books, that they are simply indispensable. No matter whether he agrees with them or not, he will always be stimulated by them. I have no doubt that they will make Ehrlich's name one of the most important in the Old Testament world of our time.

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The seventh series of Schweich Lectures marks an innovation, in that the lecturer was chosen from abroad and the lectures were not given in English. This was in part due to the war, which brought the

[1] A. Van Hoonacker, *Une communauté Judéo-Araméenne à Eléphantine, en Egypte, aux VIe et Ve siècles avant J.-C.* [The Schweich Lectures, 1914.] London: Oxford University Press, 1915. Pp. xii+91. 3*s*. net.